

DISTINGUISHED JUDGE AWARDS

*Written for the Judicial News
by Nancy Evans*

Judge Steven Timm 1st Judicial District Gage County Court Distinguished Service to the Judiciary

Every team has a “go-to” player. The one, when the chips are down, you call on to get the job done – even if that job is not one that grabs the spotlight or the glory.

Gage County Judge Steven Timm is one of those kinds of folks – a judge willing to volunteer his time to several efforts to educate young lawyers,



Chief Justice Hendry, Judge Steve Timm (right) and his wife, Pat Timm (center)

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Judge Linda Porter Lancaster County Juvenile Court Distinguished Service to the Community Award

Lancaster County Juvenile Court Judge Linda Porter admits she’s one of those people who can’t say “no” when asked to help.

As a result of one of those “can’t-say-no” moments, the judge has become a state leader in Teen Parents and the Law (TPAL), an innovative program through the Nebraska Bar



Judge Linda Porter (center) and her husband, Jim Walker (right) and Chief Justice Hendry

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monitor legislation and help new judges across the state.

For that reason and others, he is the 2004 recipient of the Chief Justice's Distinguished Judge for Improvement of the Judiciary.

Why does Timm believe it's important to help others in the judicial system? "Being a judge is a privilege and doing volunteer work, particularly to assist other judges and lawyers, is a way of showing that I'm grateful for that privilege."

A 1974 graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law, Timm, 59, starting teaching at the annual Young Lawyer's Seminar just four years into his legal career.

His list of credits as a presenter, office holder and educator has grown long in the years since.

"Steve is an excellent example to the public and bench of how to be a judge," said Douglas County Court Judge Doug Johnson.

Timm, he said, is an excellent educator who is respected for his intellect and fair-mindedness, and is pleasant to work with due to his sense of humor and professional demeanor.

"He has regularly helped out in our court," Johnson said.

Timm practiced law in Lexington with the firm of Smith & Smith for two years before joining the Gage County Attorney's office in 1976. He served as county attorney before being appointed a county judge in the 1st District in 1980 by then-Gov. Charlie Thone.

For the past several years, Timm has given the annual update on legislation affecting his fellow judges as part of the Bar Association's Legislative Committee. His seminar, "The Nuts and Bolts of Trial Practice," is a regular presentation at the annual county judge's seminar.

The judge served as president of the Nebraska County Judges Association in 1989-1990.

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Foundation aimed at helping teen parents in trouble.

That work is among the reasons Judge Porter is this year's recipient of the Chief Justice's Distinguished Service to the Community Award.

A graduate of the University of Cincinnati School of Law and a juvenile court judge since 1999, Judge Porter, 49, attended a two-day training session in Maryland in 2003 that enabled the Bar Foundation to launch a TPAL program in Nebraska.

With her help in "training the trainers" and explaining how Nebraska law affects teen parents, the state now has 40 teachers, counselors and professionals in the non-profit field who are well-versed in the TPAL program, which teaches young parents practical law and life skills.

"Judge Porter exemplifies the best of the legal profession with her deep commitment to protecting children and helping families," said Alexandra Ashbrook, the senior director of Street Law and the co-author of the TPAL curriculum.

Ashbrook said the judge's "open, honest" manner put TPAL trainees at ease. They were able to learn valuable information about how the courts address child abuse and neglect, she said, so they can teach that information to pregnant and parenting teens.

The judge said she became interested in TPAL because even though teen pregnancy rates are down, the courts are still seeing too many teen parents, often for delinquency or child abuse.

"I thought there was a lack of services in terms of teaching them good parenting skills and how their choices affect their children," Judge Porter said.

She said she refers teen parents who appear before her in court to the TPAL program as part of their probation.

"This program is different from others in the state," she said. "It encourages them to think about the law as it relates to parents and children. It promotes respect for the law and active involvement and appreciation for it."

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